

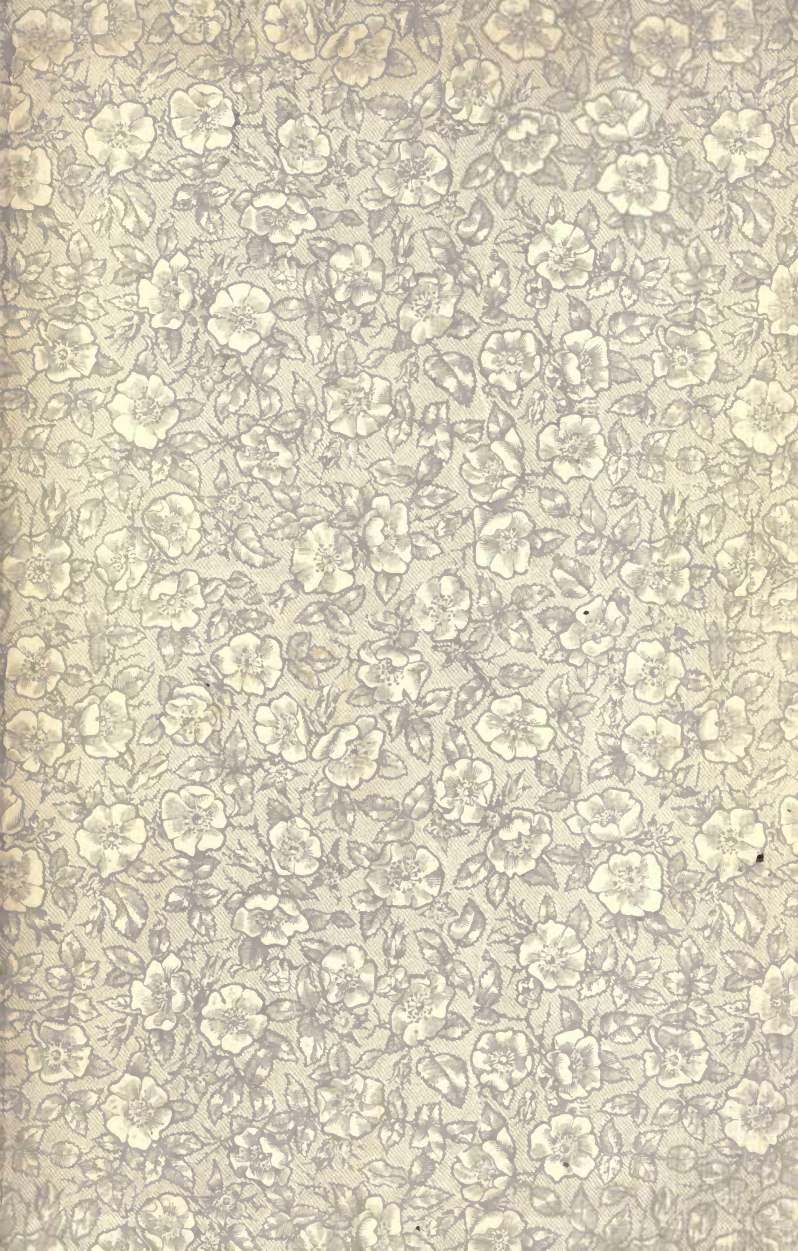
Notes on the Dis-
trict of Menteith
For Tourists and
Others by
R. B. Cunningham
Graham.



LONDON

Adam and Charles Black
1895







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NOTES ON THE DISTRICT
OF MENTEITH

*In 2 vols., demy 8vo,
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SANTA TERESA

HER LIFE AND TIMES

BY

GABRIELA CUNNINGHAME

GRAHAM



Loch Achray

A & C. BLACK. LONDON.

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OF MENTEITH

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BY

R. B. CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM

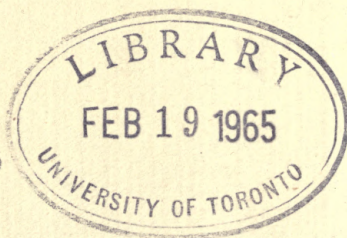


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I dedicate this little work to Mr. Wilkie, of Balfroun, known to the world as "Trootie." This I do because, being himself a shadow of the time before the railway snorted across our moors, he should know most of the shadows as they come and go over the district. Already the shadow of St. Rollox's chimney, so to speak, reaches almost to Inverness, and in the time to come there will be no place for such as "Trootie."

PREFACE

TO THE DISINGENUOUS READER

THERE must be many such in the world, that is if reading is the least like other forms of business. Therefore I address myself to you, O Disingenuous Reader, believing as I do in the wisdom, taste, and rectitude of majorities, and I take it that amongst readers you are in the majority. If, therefore, the greatest number of readers be disingenuous, it follows as a political sequence that the manner of their reading is the right manner. Your majority can make black white and right wrong, in fact often does so.

Now the man who writes a book, even such an unambitious one as the present booklet, likes to have the majority on his side, for certain reasons. Moreover, he who writes a book acts usually as a horse-dealer does in

assigning his reason for parting with the animal he is selling. That is, the writer commonly conceals his reason for writing, or at best puts forth some plea so transparent that by it no one is deceived. And touching my object, I will declare it later, that is, if circumstances render it expedient for me so to do. Suffice it to say that it was not penned for the general benefit of mankind, nor, as far as I know, to increase knowledge, either scientific or theological.

Least of all did I labour and struggle with the evil generation of copyists and others, who make our mystery a weariness of the flesh, as Chaucer setteth forth, to enunciate some great truth which I had discovered. If in my peregrinations about the region of Menteith I had lighted on any such matter, I should have kept it to myself, thus ensuring to it at least one believer. It is commonly the case that when a man writes an account of any district that the natives are enchanted, if in his descriptions there is anything that they can comprehend, or have ever heard before related.

The casual writer, too, if he can detect a printer's error, or an inaccuracy of statement, writes to a newspaper and rejoices most consumedly. There-

fore, in descriptions of any district, it is not infrequent that a writer pleases where he did not look to have given pleasure. Some have (it is asserted) entertained angels unawares. What I have set down I have set down half in idleness and half out of that affection which is common to man and trees for the soil in which they have been for ages rooted. What I have set down in error, O Disingenuous Reader, put down, I pray, not to any malice of afore- or after-thought, but rather to the innate devilry of type-writers, barratry of mariners, the act of God, or any of those causes to which mankind is prone to attribute their own errors. Vale.

R. B. CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM.

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SHADOWS OF MENTEITH

CHAPTER I

DESCRIPTIVE

With a general idea of the configuration of the district of Menteith ; also a digression as to whether religious belief may not modify the human countenance ; and other matters connected with other things.

MENTEITH has always seemed to me a shadowy district. On the one side the shadows of the Grampians stretch towards the Campsies ; the shadows of the Campsies at times stretch to the Grampians. On a summer evening often only a little belt of tawny heather or bright green moss is left in the sunlight ; all the intervening space is bathed in shadow. The Flanders Moss has been a sea, tradition says, and those sworn enemies, the science of the study and the science of outdoor observation, seem to corroborate one another in confirming the tradition. The sea, it is said, once washed round the rocks at the foot of Stirling

Castle, and extended to the "Clach nan Lunn" (the Stone of the Wave), on the Easter Hill of Gartmore; so, at least, the iron ring in the aforementioned stone was accounted for. The Clach nan Lunn is gone, broken up by an otherwise unenterprising farmer. The sea is gone, and in its place the low flat moss remains; but still the shadow of the sea seems to hang over it, and the sea-gulls hover screaming about it, as if the moss might change to waves once more. Reminiscences of a mysterious and stormy past still cling to the district. Nearly every hill and strath has had its battles between the Grahams and the McGregors. Highlander and Lowlander fought in the lonely glens or on the stony hills, or drank together in the aqua-vitæ houses in the times of their precarious peace.

Monk the Restorer led his more or less merry men through the Pass of Aberfoyle. He addressed a letter to the Earl of Airth desiring him to order the cutting down of the woods of Miltown and Glessart in Aberfoyle, "whiche are grete shelters to the rebelles and mossers." * Said letter dated from Cardross House.

In the same Pass of Aberfoyle the Earl of Glencairn and Graham of Duchray defeated a party of my Lord Protector's soldiers. Graham of Duchray, no doubt, fought all the better because

* Paper in Gartmore Charter-chest.

the Cromwellians had burnt his house the night before the action, in order to show him that it was unwise to attach too much importance to mere houses built with hands.

Robert the Bruce visited the Priory of Inchcolme in 1310, in one of the brief intervals of rest in the battle of his life, though he had visited the island twice before, once as an adventurer, and once on his way from Rathlin Island to the North. In this third visit he granted a charter to the monks of Aberbrothock, dated "apud Insulam Sancti Colmoci." Montrose must have known the district from end to end, and probably acquired his knowledge of the Highlanders in his youth, as boys on the frontiers of America learn the habits of the Indians.

Knox, as far as history informs us, never deaved the inhabitants of the stewartry with any of his clavers, though Claverhouse now and then deaved them to some extent by reason of his knocks.

The latter worthy corresponded much with the Earl of Menteith, and on one occasion compliments him thus: "I rejoice to hear you have now taken my trade of my hande, that you are becom a terror to the godly."* This was on the occasion of the Earl having exerted himself against the Covenanters.

* Letter from Claverhouse quoted in "Red Book of Menteith."

He also tells him that he knows "that feue have toyld so muche for honour as I have don, though it has been my misfortune to atteene but a small shear." * Of glory certainly he did "atteene his shear," but honour, if it means money—and I think that is the way we estimate the commodity at the present time—like most of the name of Graham, he never succeeded in "atteening" much.

Rob Roy himself was a sort of unofficial local Chancellor of the Exchequer, and did his work so thoroughly that not a single case exists of conscience money ever having been paid into the treasury at Craig Royston.

His blessed Majesty Charles, first of the name, was pleased to stop at Milling Farm, on the Lake of Menteith, and take his "poor dejeune"; also to borrow certain moneys from the Earl of Menteith—said moneys still unpaid, though his pious son, the ever-blessed Rowley, at Portend Farm (close to Milling), was pleased to "heerby promise on the word off ane prince to sie it faithfullie payed whenever we fynde occasiune." † Occasiune has not arisen as yet, but hope springs eternal in the human breast.

* Letter from Claverhouse quoted in "Red Book of Menteith."

† Warrant by Charles II. in favour of William Earl of Airth.

On the island of the wood-locked lake Augustine monks dwelt for centuries. Their memories still cling to the ruined church and monastery. One whole year of the troubled life of Mary Queen of Scots was passed as a child on the same islet. She, too, has left memories which hang about her little garden, girt with box-trees, as the scent of rose-leaves kept in a china bowl still lingers though the leaves have mouldered into dust.

In the mountain fastnesses near Aberfoyle many of those who fled from Culloden found refuge, thus bringing the Middle Ages, so to speak, almost to yesterday.

So it is, to me at least, that the district seems a "shadowy one," for memories are the shadows of men's lives.

Dr. Johnson could not be got to believe that the most disturbed districts of the Highlands were those which bordered on the Lowlands. Still, it is very easy for any one who stands on the Loch Katrine road from Aberfoyle, and looks back over the district of Menteith, to see why this was the case. The Grampians, running down at this point into a rich and fertile district, formed a secure retreat for the Highlanders, both to make their sallies from and to return to, with their booty.

The interior of a savage country is always quieter than its frontier, for in the interior the

peculiar social constitution of the people is always in more perfect order, and few countries ever live in a state of constant warfare. The Highlands, though, were not a savage country, but, on the contrary, an old civilised country, of a peculiar kind of civilisation.

Much the same state of things must have existed there two centuries ago as exist to-day in Tripoli and Morocco and in Afghanistan—a regular polity, of an antiquated sort, and not a society like that of some of the frontiers of America, which may be compared to a sort of kaleidoscope of human atoms looked at through the hind sights of a Winchester rifle. Perhaps no district of the Highland frontier was so typically a borderland as the district of Menteith; perhaps at no one point in all Scotland is the dividing line between Celt and Saxon more distinct in the nomenclature, language, and configuration of the two countries. Till a short time ago—for sixty or seventy years is a short time in the history of a country—the habits of the people were as distinct as they are to-day in Spain and Portugal on their respective sides of the Minho. At Tuy, in Galicia, though a portentous international iron bridge spans the river, the separation between those peoples is as complete as in the days when a clumsy boat, rowed by five Portuguese women, took the traveller over the stream, as when the writer first crossed on his way from Santiago

de Compostela to Oporto, or as in the Middle Ages. The Spaniards still talk of the villainy of those Portuguese, and whilst cheating the stranger with the utmost imperturbability themselves, warn him, philanthropically, to beware of the dishonesty of the Portuguese in Valença. A similar sharp demarcation is to be observed at Salvatierra and Monzon, which look at one another across the same river with as charitable feelings as those with which the Free Church minister gazes at the manse of the Establishment in a modern Scottish village.

If this is the case amongst people who are identical in origin with the Galicians and the Portuguese, how much more must it have been between the Saxon Lowlander and the Highlander in the days when it was a practical saying that "the Forth bridles the wild Highlandman." Even to-day, though convention has lent a thin varnish of hypocrisy to manners, the old feeling of antagonism is not dead, and occasionally is very noticeable at ploughing matches, Highland games, and other public festivities. In Menteith, which the American traveller whirls through in the railway without time to realize that he is passing into as different a country in a few minutes as it takes hours to do in going from one State to another of the American Union, the long antagonism of race has left its results in many ways. On the

lowland side of the Forth the countryman is a "bodach," a heavy and excellent being, but uninteresting unless seen through the spectacles of a patriotic novelist. You cannot find a decent shepherd amongst them ; they know too much ever to remember their sheep.

Education is a splendid thing for engineers, county councillors, and waiters ; it makes them fit to bear their crosses and to impose others on the general public, but it spoils a shepherd. A shepherd is born, rarely made, and the native Highlander has generally a genius for the business.

In the flat district of Menteith the countryman is too anxious to raise and improve himself. Who ever heard either of a shepherd or a poet anxious to do either the one or the other ? Throughout Menteith, though poets are as scarce as in most other parts of the world, you can find many valuable shepherds. This, no doubt, arises from the proximity of the Highlands and the mixture of blood. The good (Highland) shepherd does not give his life for his sheep, or for anything else, with the possible exception of whisky ; but he fulfils at least as useful a function in the State as the minor poet, and in this respect, therefore, Menteith is at least on an equality with Grub Street. The people (that is, those of the old stock) seem to me to have preserved more of

the characteristics of a fighting race than those of almost any other district of Scotland.

Not that they are quarrelsome more than good citizens should be, but a rooted dislike to any continuous occupation is very noticeable amongst them. This is said to be the case with all those races descended from ancestors who have been constantly engaged in war.

The climate of the western portion of Menteith is mild and humid; the snow rarely lies long in winter, nor does the sun shine overmuch in summer; and much of the country is not far above the sea-level. Whether on account of the constant rain, or from the virulence of the religious beliefs of the natives, it is uncertain, but travellers have remarked that in few parts of Scotland are the faces of the people so much lined and scarred. "A wet cloak ill laid up," or "the new map together with the augmentation of the Indies," are apt descriptions of many of their countenances. Ethnologists have not remarked if the features of the inhabitants of Strathglass in Inverness-shire, or those districts of Aberdeenshire which have remained Catholic, are as repellent as those of the inhabitants of the more essentially Protestant cantons of Scotland; and the testimony of theologians on such a matter would be doubtful. If Buckle is correct in his theory that the minds and even the bodies of men are moulded by the aspect of the

country in which they live, the inhabitants of Menteith might well be rough, for most of the land they live in is a mass of hillocks and hummocks, broken up by little pools intersected with rushing streams, hirsute with heather, the fields stony as those of Palestine, the whole country bounded by mountains to the north and huge flat mosses to the south.

As the lantern of Maracaibo dominates the sea of the same name, Ben Lomond dominates the land—a sort of Scottish Vesuvius, never wholly without a cloud-cap. You cannot move a step that it does not tower over you. In winter, a vast white sugar-loaf; in summer, a prismatic cone of yellow and amethyst and opaline lights; in spring, a grey, gloomy, stony pile of rocks; in autumn, a weather indicator: for when the mist curls down its sides, and hangs in heavy wreaths from its double summit, “it has to rain”; as the Spaniards say of Jabalcuz, in the Vega of Granada, “ha de llover aunque Dios no quiera.” In fact, the characteristic and chief feature of the district—a very nose upon its face. Ben Ledi and Ben Venue the minor lights or heights; Ben Voil in the distance, peeping over the shoulder of Ben Lawers; Ben More, Craig Vadh, the Gualan (the Shoulder in Gaelic); the Ochils and the Campsies, with the rock of Stirling, and sometimes a faint blue line of the hills in Fife. In the far Highlands rise Ben

Nevis, Ben Voilich, Schehallion, and many another, which have done Sir Walter Scott good yeoman service. A kind of sea of moss and heath, a bristly country (Trossachs is said to mean the bristled land), shut in by hills on every side. Sometimes, indeed, so broken is the ground that one wonders if the "riders of Menteith" that history talks of were mortal riders, or a sort of Walkuren sacred to the Valhalla of the district. Menteith, like other regions of Scotland and of England, is losing fast all the remaining characteristics of the past. The old-fashioned Scotch is going rapidly, giving place to a hideous jargon between the East End of Glasgow and that of London. No doubt in times to come pure English will be spoken from St. Michael's Mount to John o' Groat's; but in the meantime, sometimes, one longs for decent Cornish or Scottish, if people will be talking. Hardly an old tradition really lives (apart from books) in the memories of the people. Scarcely a dozen real old types, even faintly approaching to those which Scott and Galt delighted in, remain, and they as few and far between as trees in hedges. Surely but steadily the thing called civilisation (see Edward Carpenter for its "Cause and Cure") has covered up most of the remaining high lights of the old world with its dark grey pall. Certain it is at present the effect is not a pleasant still less a pretty

one. A world of people each so like his brother that his wife can only differentiate him by the buttons on his ulster is not a cheering sight, but in the future, it may be, we shall get the type again, and see less of the man run like a candle out of a mould.

Gone are the Augustinian monks who built the stately island church. Out of the ruined chancel grows a plane-tree, which is almost ripe. In the branches rooks have built their nests, and make as cheerful matins as perhaps the monks themselves. The giant chestnuts, grown, as tradition says, from chestnuts brought from Rome, are all stag-headed. Ospreys used to build in them in the memory of those still living. Gone are the riders of Menteith (if they ever existed); the ruggers and the reivers are at one with those they harried. The Grahams and McGregors, the spearmen and the jackmen, the hunters and the hawkers, the livers by their spurs, the luckless Earls of Menteith and their retainers, are buried and forgotten, and the tourist cracks his biscuit and his jest over their tombs.

Gaelic is gone, or only just remembered by the elder generation, yet it gave the names to all the burns and glens and lochs; names curious and descriptive, like the names the Indians give to places in America. It may be, when all are numbered, Ben Number One, Loch Number Two, and so on, that even Gaelic will become a thing to be re-

gretted. What is most to be deplored is that the ancient Scottish courtesy of manner has gone too, and given place to the "transition manners" which make every man inferior to his neighbour. The old-time Scottish kindness is said to linger still, but where deponent sayeth not. Where stood the Highland cottage thatched with heather and roof kept on with birchen poles and stones, and gardened with house-leek and corydalis, now stand the hideous slate-roofed cottages, properly sanitized, and hideous enough to spean a bairn. From the beginning of the world children have drawn the design of the latter dwelling upon their slate. Over the Fingalian path, where once the redshank trotted on his Highland garron, the bicyclist, the incarnation of the age, looks to a sign-post and sees, "This hill is dangerous."

The Grahams and the McGregors have, it is to be hoped, dropped their long enmity in the world or worlds where they have gone to. Their names, once so numerous in the stewartry of Menteith, seem almost to have disappeared out of the land. The days are changed from the times when an Earl of Menteith entered into a league against "all but the kinge and those of the name of Grahame." Perhaps it is as well they are gone, for they were always (like Jeshurun) mighty prone to kick, though commonly not waxing very fat. It is good that all should change, for novelty is

grateful to mankind ; besides, it paves the way to the happy time when all shall sit, appavelled in one livery, at little tables, drinking some kind of not too diuretic " table water " approved by the County Council, and reading expurgated Bibles.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL

Containing some reflections on ancient history in general; also some account of Gilchrist, the first Earl of Menteith, and of how certain English adventurers, for the bettering of their private fortunes, intermarried with certain Scottish ladies; and of other things which may be profitable to the student in local history.

HISTORY of any kind is generally written for one of two objects: either to falsify some set of political events or to show the writer's erudition. As regards the first of these objects, the present writer believes that to endeavour to falsify political events is a work of supererogation. In regard to the second, this little sketch is abundant proof of his complete innocence.

Ancient Highland families often kept a "Leabhar dearg" (*Anglice*, Red Book), in which they set down what seemed remarkable to them. The unfortunate thing is, that what seemed remarkable to them is generally uninteresting to the modern reader; that which the modern reader would have

been infinitely obliged to them for recording was to them commonplace. What they chiefly chronicled were the accounts of fights, of murders, of sudden deaths, marriages, and apparitions of saints and goblins. What we should have desired to hear of would have been the account of the fashions of their clothes and arms, the amount of half-raw meat, or quantity of bowls of porridge, they consumed in a day; if women had rights amongst them, and of what kind they were; and as to whether there were any other amusements at night except the somewhat monotonous pastime of sitting listening to the bards chanting the praises of Fingal and his heroes. Even the bards at times must have been somewhat flat, for in such a climate the difficulty of keeping the Clairseagh at English concert pitch must have been almost insuperable. It is, perhaps, as interesting to read in Barbour's "Bruce"* that "crackes of warre," *i.e.* cannons, were first seen at such a battle, as to learn the style and title of all the knights killed or taken prisoners at the battle in question.

From the earliest ages Menteith was one of the five great districts into which Scotland was divided. Its ancient history, down to the creation of the earldom in the twelfth century, was as shadowy and indefinite as that of most parts of Scotland at the time. For what, after all, is the

* Book XIV. line 168.

knowledge of the fact that a man's name was appended to a charter in the twelfth or thirteenth century of avail to the general public? Early history of almost any kind is as fragmentary reading as is a railway guide, and about as illusory and fallacious. In neither case does one ever seem to be able to get anywhere. The history of Menteith formed no exception, and even the few deeds of violence which relieve the eternal monotony of subscribing charters are not sufficiently authenticated to induce much repulsion towards their shadowy perpetrators.

One Gilchrist was the first Earl, but nothing is known of him except that he existed. In this respect he has a decided advantage over some historical personages. On Gilchrist, at any rate, the burden of proof does not lie, as on some other characters in history, for he is mentioned as one of the witnesses to a charter by Malcolm IV. to the Abbey of Scone, granted in the eleventh year of his reign, 1164, under the style and title of Gillecrist Comes de Menteith. It is not stated in what manner Earl Gilchrist witnessed the charter, but it seems not unlikely, belonging to the category (as he probably did) of "Knights, Lordes, and other worthy men who can litel Latin," that he placed a modest cross after his name in the usual style of the ancient Scottish nobility.

McGregor Stirling says, in his book on the

Priory of Inchmahome, that the earliest spelling of the name Menteith is found in Appendix I. to James's "Essay of the Antiquities of Scotland," and that there it is written "Meneted." In a charter dated 1234 it is spelt "Mynteth." There was a noble freedom about ancient spelling which added much to the interest of many sciences, notably to geography.

No reliable derivation of the word has ever been presented to me, but it is not unlikely a compound of the word Teith, as that river runs through the earldom. The Highlanders called the Teith the Taich, and applied the name also to the whole district, as the word Menteith is said to be unknown to them. They also called it the "warm river," on account of the high wooded ground through which lies much of its course.

From the twelfth century down to the middle of the seventeenth century, the usual monotonous course of villainy, which characterised all Scottish history both of that epoch and of later times, went on with unfailing regularity.

In the time of James III. the town of Port of Menteith was erected into a burgh or barony by a charter which bears the date of 8th February 1466.

The forests in Menteith were at that time one of the favourite hunting resorts of the Scottish Court. Scotland enjoyed Home Rule in those

days, and the blessing of a national parliament, with the pleasure of knowing that the taxes were wasted in Edinburgh instead of in London. It is doubtful if the forests alluded to in the old charters were really woods, or only grounds set apart for hunting. Certainly at the present day Menteith is entirely bare of natural woods, with the exception of oak and birch coppices which fringe the streams and sometimes jut out into the fields, forming peninsulas of wood, and at other times enclosing little open spaces of ground in a complete circle. In 1538, in the "Lord Treasurer's Account" (see "History of the Forest of Glenfinlas"), there is an entry for payment of a horse "whiche was slaine tursand the kinge's venisoune out of Glenfinlas, at the kinge's command and precept." How the horse was "slaine" is not set down; but as even a king would hardly (by command and precept) enjoin his foresters to pile venison on a horse till its back was broken, it seems probable that some McGregor may have shot him out of pure delight in life. The king had to provide himself for his hunting as if he had been going into the Pan Handle of Texas, for another item occurs in the treasurer's accounts, "to fee twa careage horsis, to turse the king's bed, and uther graithe to the hunting."

It seems probable that the regal taste in venerie descended sometimes to a species of battue. For

the entry: "Pro expenses per eundem Willelmum factis, tempore venationis in floresta de Glenfyn-gask, et per importatione (*sic*) bestiarum ferarum Domino Regi." "Importatione" is significant, and may have served as a precedent for the Master of the Buckhounds. How pleasant Latin, written in the above style, becomes, and how comprehensible to any one gifted with an adequate knowledge of the Scottish tongue!

One may suppose, and supposition is most lawful in history, especially in Scottish history, that the whole earldom was continually involved in broils with its Highland neighbours. Norman barons seem to have visited the district periodically, as when Sir Edward Hastings was ordered into Scotland by Edward I. in 1298. He came to assist in the conquest of Scotland, and promptly married the heiress of Menteith, Lady Isabella de Comyn, and signed himself afterwards Edward Hastings Comes de Menteith, with considerable prolixity.* Even before that, in 1273, a futile Englishman, Sir John Russell, married a widowed countess of Menteith. Her relations considered the match an ignoble one, but the countess secured the advantage of a residence in the comparatively milder climate of England, where she died and was buried. This family of Russell has subsequently been mentioned occasion-

* See Sir William Fraser's "Red Book of Menteith."

ally in English history, but since then has never again intruded into Menteith.

It is a humiliating fact to have to set down, and greatly to the discredit of democracy, that the only shred of interest in the dreary annals of treachery, arson, and murder which go to make up the history of Menteith, attaches to the Earls themselves and their adventures. Indeed, in reference to the early history of Menteith there is such a plethora of hard dry facts that little human interest can be extracted from them. It is certain, indeed, that Edward III. of England, with that cheerful disregard of justice which was one of his attributes, and unquestionably goes far to make up his greatness in the eyes of historians, executed an Earl of Menteith, who was taken prisoner with King David at Durham in 1346, on the paltry plea that he had once sworn fealty to himself, as if an oath more or less was ever a hindrance to a patriot.

This Earl of Menteith, Sir John Graham, the ninth earl, seems to have been a man of courage and sense, and had his advice been followed at the battle of Durham, to charge the English archers on their flanks, the disaster might have been averted. Wynton, occasionally a severe critic of the Scottish nobility, makes him exclaim to the king: "Gettes me but men ane hundred on hors wyth me to go, and all your archyrs skayle sall I." Quite naturally, his advice was disregarded, and

the king was taken prisoner and his army routed. When, though, have not kings, in common with deaf adders, been famous for stopping their ears to the words of wise counsel?

In the case of kings it may be that the exigencies of their position often forced them to appear more foolish than they really were, though the necessity is not often apparent.

Why an adder which was born deaf should put itself to further trouble in the matter remains a mystery. The various families of Menteith, Stewart and Grahame, who held the earldom at various times, their Murdochs, Morices, and Malises succeeding one another, produced some stout phlebotomists and now and then a mediocre statesman. But fortune never seemed to smile upon them. Unfortunate people have always been the very sheet-anchors of historians. They have furnished them with reams of "copy," with matter for infinite digression, and without digression all histories would be as lethal as that of Guicciardini's.

CHAPTER III

SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE INCONTINENCE OF KINGS

Treating of the redness of the blood; the fortunes of William, seventh Earl of Menteith; of the incontinence of a king, and other things; the slaughter of Lord Kilpont; and how the body of Stewart of Ardvoirlich was "shoughed" at the Point of Coilmore.

THE misfortunes which from the beginning of their history had always pursued the holders of the title of Menteith, so thickened in the reign of Charles I. that they eventually overwhelmed the earls entirely.

In countries like England and Scotland, where there is no idea of abstract dignity or essential worth in any one who does not keep a carriage, the position of a poor peer has always been most painful. Many a bill for a suit of armour from Milan, or an overdue account from Toledo for swords, must have disturbed the slumbers of the Earls of Menteith from the days of David Earl of Stratherne downwards.

Still they were as cheerful as well as an unfortunate race, not apparently humourists, but of a sanguine temperament. When they were exiled, or forfeited, or forced to attend parliaments, or scour the country in pursuit of "phanatickes" or "Hielande rogues," it was all one to them; they relied on their descent from a royal prince, and fought manfully against the dreary climate of their native land and the assaults of their own and the king's enemies.

At the age of forty-eight we find William, eighth Earl of Menteith, writing to the Marquis of Montrose from the "Yle of Menteith," under date of 4th January, 1680, "Ther is nothing on earth I love so well as to be in a just war for my King and Prince."

A mighty pretty sentiment, and one that does his lordship's loyalty much credit. Most of us even now would like to be engaged in a just war (if we could be sure of one) for our king and prince, especially if these last were subjected to danger, or sufficiently interesting to raise enthusiasm. The expression of the wish was natural enough in one whose grandfather had boasted that his blood was redder than the king's, and who only wanted a sharp sword, as a contemporary nobleman observed, to make his boast a valid one. Sharp swords (and even axes) have often been excellent instruments of service. as the

king in question, Charles the Martyr, was destined to discover. To have blood redder than a king's, that is genealogically, not chemically, is of itself a capital crime; but that it was a fact appears extremely likely.

It is with considerable pain that I have to refer to anything that might in any way seem to be an aspersion on the morality of one of our Scottish kings. Personal morality has always been the strong point of our Scottish Sovereigns. It is hinted amongst those not of the blood royal, that personal chastity—the “*Lacha ye trupos*,” as the gipsies call it—is not so keenly valued as Captain Cook found it to be in the Marquesas Islands, but this a prudent writer may well leave to the attention of statesmen. Hence a sin (if it was a sin) committed so long ago is well-nigh purified by the lapse of ages. It may be subject for debate if indeed any sin, when or how committed, is so great as that of him who comments on and by that means spreads it.

Robert II., the first prince of the house of Stewart, succeeded to the throne of Scotland in 1371. Had it not been for the bad example set by him, Scotland might still have been a moral nation. It is related of him that previous to his accession he bore the title of Earl of Stratherne, given to him by his uncle, David II.

In early life the miserable Robert had formed a

connection (so the historians describe his horrid action) with Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Allan Muir of Rowallan, by whom he had John, afterwards Robert III., Robert Duke of Albany and Earl of Fife and Menteith, and Alexander Lord of Badenoch. In 1347 he obtained a Papal dispensation for his marriage with the said Elizabeth, which marriage, says Fordun (an arch-liar on occasion), took place in 1349. By this it will be observed how relatively milder the superstition of the Seven Hills was, at least in 1349, than the tyranny of Geneva became under the inquisitors Calvin and Knox. Had the superstition of either of these last-named worthies been in force, the poor king had assuredly done penance in the face of some congregation of his loyal subjects.

Not content with what had passed, in 1356 the king married Euphemia, daughter of the Earl of Ross. As he again obtained a Papal dispensation for his rash act, he would seem to have been incorrigible. Willingly I would draw a veil over him and his papally dispensed wives, but the duties of a historian are to be impartial—that is to say, impartial to the failings of kings. As to their virtues, they demand to be more carefully distorted before the public can bear to look on them. From this second marriage (or connection) there were two sons, David and Walter. Walter disappears in the obscurity of the earldom of Caith-

ness and dukedom of Atholl. David, afterwards Earl of Stratherne, was the progenitor of the Earls of Menteith. Buchanan, a despicable fellow, in spite of his latinity, with Bower and Boethius, asserts that Robert III. and the other children of Elizabeth Muir were not only born before marriage, but that the marriage of their parents did not take place till the death of Euphemia Ross.

This raises the curious point for theologians, that whereas the Pope had given already one dispensation, if he gave a second in the lifetime of the first wife, either he was not infallible or that in this particular case he was infallible, but did not choose to exercise infallibility. The impression, however, that the children of Elizabeth Muir, from whom the Stewarts were descended, were illegitimate, existed strongly in Scotland even to the time of Charles I., and hence the unlucky boast of the Earl of Menteith about the redness of his blood induced the ruin of his family. Nowadays, if we were certain that all the Stewarts had been illegitimate from the fourteenth century, it would only be another title to our esteem and affection. In those times people thought differently, and to Charles the Martyr the idea must have been peculiarly repellent. As kingship was a matter of divine right, it will be readily perceived that to stand for several hundred

years between the Deity and His Anointed was a thing not to be lightly contemplated by men of tender conscience.

Comparatively uninteresting persons the Earls of Menteith seem to have been up to the birth of William the seventh earl—that is to say those of the name of Graham.

They were born with unfailing regularity, were returned heirs of their fathers at the proper time, married, hunted, fished, administered injustice after their kind, and died, and their place knew them no more. From Malise Graham, in 1427, through Alexander, William, John, to William the seventh earl, Johns and Williams succeeded one another as passively as keys upon a plane-tree in the recurring autumns of its existence. Some of them attended parliaments and courts, but their most frequent occupation (at least that has come down to us) was the signing and witnessing of charters. In this latter occupation they seem to have at least equalled in diligence other noblemen of their time and standing. True it is that William, the third Earl, contrived to get himself killed in 1543 by the Tutor of Appin. It still remains a moot point as to whether the credit of the action is to be put down to the slayer or the slain. Jamieson's portrait of the seventh Earl shows us a man of a different stamp. Long hair, small ruff, with quilted doublet

and pointed beard, he looks the type of the novelist's "unlucky nobleman." One divines at once that such a man, however red his blood, never was made for success; he looks too honourable. If, as the proverb says, profit and honour go not in one bag, the like may be extended to success. Whether painted by Jamieson, Titian, or Velasquez, the successful man proclaims himself in spite of the artist. Not that Velasquez ever softened the acerbities of success, or left out a single mean line or a wrinkle even of the features of a king. Still success, like drink, is sure to mar a face. The price that is paid for it is sure to leave its mark.

It appears the seventh Earl was born in 1589. The author of the "Red Book of Menteith" remarks that "from comparative obscurity he rose with great rapidity to be the most influential nobleman in his country." His fall, however, was even more rapid. Had he been but an ordinary successful courtling of the Villiers stamp, perhaps he would have been as utterly uninteresting as many of the favourites of the pious but mendacious Charles. Early in life we find him inspecting his charter-chests in the Isle of Talla, and noting down, amongst other things, "that the original chartar of the erldome of Mentheith with tua ither greit evidendis, are in ane litell coffer bandet with brass."

This seems a curious statement, as modern writers on the subject are agreed that the original

charter of the earldom of Menteith never existed, or that, if it did, it was destroyed at a period anterior to that at which the Earl is of opinion that he saw it. In cases such as these, the modern writer, with his modern instances, is sure to be more worthy of belief than the mediæval chronicler. For, strange as it may appear, it is almost always proved to demonstration that when a personage in history sets down that he has seen a certain thing, your modern commentator is always sure to prove the thing was never within the range of the ancient's vision. At times a doubt arises whether any one who was born before the present century was not an idiot. Be that as it may, it is a dangerous thing for noblemen who lack advancement to pore too much on ancient documents. Your ancient document, with its crabbed characters, its crumpled edges, soft yellow paper or parchment, and its ponderous seal, is always so explicit. It seems to say so much and says so little, just like your modern politician. Poring upon his charters, Earl William took it into his head to redeem his family estates, which kings and others had filched away from him. So in 1619 he redeemed the lands of Dunmore from Grissel Stirling, in 1624 the lands of Rednock, and so on. So far so good. It is a commendable enough thing for a nobleman to do to extend his boundaries at his neighbours' expense.

In 1621 he was appointed justiciar over Menteith. Theft, reset of theft, and pykrie were most common at the time in the district. In more modern times, pykrie is rarer, but still exists.* Again we find him incidentally mentioned by James I. in a letter to the Earl of Mar, in which his Majesty bespeaks "some of those dogges they calle terrieres, and in Scotlande earth dogges." It appears the Earl of Menteith was the possessor of some, "whiche are bothe stoute, good for killers, and will stay longe in the grunde." Little by little he became a Privy Councillor, and a Commissioner of the Exchequer, and Justice General of Scotland. It is not set down if in his office he continued to pursue "reset of theft and pykrie," but probably not, as pykrie, if I apprehend the matter rightly, is sometimes to be observed even in Privy Councillors.

In 1628 he received a yearly pension of £500. In those days pensions were cheaper to the nation than at present, for they were rarely paid when granted; a very commendable practice. The unpaid pension is a burden that a nation can stand to the tune of millions. No one is hurt except the hypothetical receiver, and he, if he has really per-

* Writers on legal matters leave us in some doubt as to the nature of "pykrie," but the balance of their opinion seems to suggest the supposition that it was a method of conveyancing.

formed a public service, is only paid in the same coin by the public as he would be paid in private by those he had obliged. In poor Earl William's case the pension was an especially barren honour, as it seems he had expended at least £500 in providing robes for the judges of the circuit courts at his own expense. Not contented with searching his "littel brass-banded coffer" in the Isle of Talla, the Earl must needs go and search the national archives. In these, in 1629, he found the documents which caused his ruin. Most modest-minded men—and Scotsmen are proverbially modest—will shrink from making public the frailties of a Scottish king, even though the frailties had been committed ages ago.

Earl William must needs obtain two charters of Robert II. of the earldom of Stratherne to his son David. Now, as we know that this same Robert was the very king who could never marry a wife without a Papal dispensation, the importance of that action at once appears. If William Earl of Menteith was really the heir of David Earl of Stratherne, and if the mother of the said Earl was the only lawful wife of the King (Robert II.), it was at once patent that William also should have been the King of England in place of Charles, who really was an interloper. Perish the thought; up to that time no one had called the title of King Charles in question.

Indeed it was not politic to do so, Charles was a man so eminently kingly. Who sat so well and quietly to Vandyke? Who rode more stately on a cream-coloured horse from Naples or from Cordoba? Who looked so melancholy? Who lied so circumstantially, or worshipped God more piously, than Charles, in the three kingdoms? Under these circumstances it would have been worse than a crime, almost, in fact, an error in good breeding, to supplant him. It is not alleged in any of the kingly attributes set down above that William, seventh Earl of Menteith, surpassed the King. It is not, indeed, apparent that he wished to supplant him in anything. In fact, his conduct proves him to the last a loyal courtier. It may be that his blood was redder than the King's; but even if it was, another Papal dispensation would doubtless have reinstated matters (and molecules) in their proper position. The search for papers in the "Yle of Menteith," and subsequent search in the national register, resulted in the Earl laying claim to the earldom of Stratherne, which had been taken from Malise Graham, first Earl of Menteith, by James I. The Earl, as direct heir-male of the Countess Euphemia of Stratherne, who married Sir Patrick Graham of Kincardine, without doubt was rightful claimant to the title of Stratherne. Sir Thomas Hope, the King's Advocate, advised him to place a renunciation of

the lands of Stratherne in the King's hands, which he did. After the usual legal formalities customary in such cases, the King was graciously pleased to accept of the lands of Stratherne, which did not apparently belong to the Earl. But when were kings, or any son of man, averse to graciously accepting that which cost them nothing? In return, the King granted a sum of £3000 to be paid to the Earl. Needless to say, he never got a penny of it, and both the King's conscience and the national exchequer were salved and comforted. In July, 1631, the King by patent ratified and approved to the Earl the title of Earl of Stratherne. Other grants of money were also adjudged to him; but payment did not wait on adjudication. Later on he obtained the lands of Airth, and reached the culminating point of his short-lived prosperity. At this time he was the first nobleman in Scotland, rich in honours and in hypothetical grants of money.

But, as not unfrequently happens, a lawyer was the cause of his downfall. Sir John Scot of Scotstarvet, director of Chancery, and author of the pamphlet, "The Staggering Ystate of Scots Statesmen," was the instrument. Either in the account he presented for services in the claim to the title of Stratherne his costs had been taxed, or the Earl had objected to paying for letters the Director of Chancery had never written, or

something of a like nature had occurred. Anyhow, from a friend he became a bitter enemy. We find him, with the Earls of Tullibardine and Seaforth, preparing a memorial to the King, which contained six reasons why the Earl of Menteith should not be allowed to remain also Earl of Stratherne.

All, of course, was grist to Scotstarvet's mill. Whether he prepared memorials for or against the Earl, he was always paid to draw them up. The reasons were certainly ingenious, notably the first, which referred vaguely to the Papal dispensations, and suggested that in case of public commotion the descendants of Euphemia Ross might claim the crown. Of course people exist foolish enough to claim crowns ; but Sir John Scot overlooked the fact that Charles, as head of the Church, was as capable as a pope to issue a dispensation declaring himself legitimately descended from whoever he chose, and also the worthy Director of Chancery omitted to inquire into the descent of the brewer of Huntingdon, a claimant to the crown more to be feared than all the nobility of Scotland.

The six suggestions having revived the sleeping jealousy which lies at most men's hearts, and most of all at the hearts of kings, the usual commission of inquiry, composed chiefly of accusers, was instituted to examine into the matter. Even in the

stupid farce called Justice that we to-day are so familiar with, such buffoonery would not be tolerated as that which seems to have taken place. Question and answer, as in a modern conversation-book, was the form the clowning took.

That staggering statesman, Scot of Scotstarvet, after several conundrums, proposed the following masterpiece of legal cynicism :

“Is it not boldness that the said Earle should have served himself heir of blood to David, Earl of Stratherne, eldest lawfull son of the first marriage to King Robert II., whereby he is put in degree of blood equall to his Majestie? It is answered in our judgment, the boldness seems too great.”

The King is said to have complained he never could love a man without some one pulling him from his arms. This from the beginning has been the pathetic fate of kings, that they could never have a friend ; but even a king need hardly have been moved to give up a friend by foolery of the calibre of the questions of Scot of Scotstarvet. On the top of this Sir Robert Dalyell reported to the king that the Earl had said “he had the reddest blood in Scotland.” Prince Rupert was a chemist, and could have reported (after phlebotomy) scientifically upon the matter.

However, this course seems to have been neglected, and the unlucky Earl was stripped of

all his dignities, ruined in estate, confined to a castle in the North, and, worst of all, a pantomimic title, the earldom of Airth, was forced upon him. Earl of Menteith had a fine rolling sound about it. Earls of Menteith had been more or less incompetent generals and statesmen for two hundred years. The title of Stratherne was royal, though carrying with it misfortune. Airth no one in his senses could care about. And the unlucky Earl seems to have used it semi-furtively, in the way that a brave general or admiral, who is made Lord Tooting or Viscount Hoxton, uses his epithet of opprobrium in modern times. Back to Airth Castle the unlucky man repaired, and then his creditors fell on him like coyotes fall upon a lean bull-buffalo in America; at least in the way they used to do in the days when buffalo existed. After his creditors appeared his friends to buy his property at half its value, as the tried and trusty friend is wont to do in times of trouble. The King, too, promised him money on hearing of his distress, but the money is included in the sums the payment of which one rather hopes for (like Sir Thomas More) than looks to see realised. Strangely, the only one of the Earl's friends who stood to him in evil fortune and purchased none of his estate was a lawyer, the Lord Advocate, Sir Thomas Hope. It almost seems he must have been of an inferior legal mind, the case is so extraordinary.

In Menteith the Earl seems to have devoted his time to field sports, as befits a country gentleman, for in 1636 he received a letter from Charles I. thanking him for the capture by his son, Lord Kilpont, of a Highland rogue, John Roy McGregor. The King assured him that this was the best way of regaining his favour, by doing him services. It would seem that had a king insulted most men by offering to make them Earl of Airth, or Camlachie, Tooting, or Bishopbriggs, that it had been more natural to have joined with honest John Roy McGregor to try and catch the king rather than hand the poor Highland rascal over to the kindly gallows of the town of Crieff.

Tastes have always strangely differed in mankind, and that which is intolerable to a bagman, a courtier seems to relish. Little by little the Earl regained the royal favour. In 1639 the sycophantic Scottish nobility almost to a man subscribed to the Covenant. The Earl and his son Kilpont refused to do so, not being good men of business.

From the days of Edward I. of England, who was a man if not a patriot, the nobility of Scotland have always been the slaves either of English kings or Scottish priests. At the present time, as kings and priests have had to some extent their day, and as the Scottish noble must have a master, he has put his neck under the yoke of the London

tailor and is happy. Instead, therefore, of joining the Highland and Covenanting rogues, the Earl preferred to try and win back royal favour, and in 1639 he was again appointed a Privy Councillor. The Earl and Lord Kilpont were made lieutenants of Stirlingshire, to raise forces against the Covenanters.

In his son John, Lord Kilpont, the unlucky Earl might have found some one to raise the fortunes of his house. It appeared that the man whose fate furnished Sir Walter Scott with the theme of one of his most enchanting novels was destined to play a brilliant part. He married the Lady Mary Keith, daughter of William Earl Marischal, and received as her dowry thirty thousand pounds Scots. Though the pound Scots is certainly inferior to the pound sterling, I fancy that the Lady Mary's dowry surpassed in value the probably hypothetical one thousand merks a year with which the Earl of Menteith proposed to endow the wife of his son. The Lord Kilpont employed himself with credit in various matters in Scotland, and was appointed one of the Committee of War for Perthshire, under the Marquis of Montrose. His death by the hand of Stewart of Ardvoilich at Collace, in Montrose's camp, extinguished all his father's hopes and broke his heart.

The author of the "Red Book of Menteith,"

quoting from a paper furnished to him by a member of the Ardvoilich family, says: "It was a hard life the Major (Ardvoilich) led after that he had slain Lord Kilpont, even though he had the Government with him." This is not so surprising to us moderns, who have seen Major Le Caron, the favoured agent of the Government of both sides of politics, pass not exactly a peaceful life. "There was (*sic*) many powerful families that were kin to the Menteiths, specially the Graems, and they were all at feud with him." It is said that even after he was dead "his followers daurna tak his body so far east as Dundura for fear of the Graems," so they just "shoughed" it at the point of Coilmore, whence it was exhumed and placed afterwards in the old chapel. A charming picture of the time. It is pleasing to reflect that even the Government could not protect Ardvoilich.

The "shoughing"* of the body is very graphic, and the word should be incorporated into the English language by Act of Parliament. So the last ray of hope went out for the unlucky Earl of Menteith, and the remainder of the voyage of his life was bound in shallows and in miseries. Little by little he lost his lands, and his creditors became

* Saxons, and the unlucky folk who live south of the Tweed, may like to learn that to "shough" means to place a plant temporarily in the ground.

clamorous. The King at one time asked that £7000 should be paid to him "out of the first and readiest of the Customs." Furthermore, he said to the Lords of the Treasury, "we recommend this seriouslie unto you and expect your performance thereof." However, the debt was not paid, and King Charles, in 1651, again acknowledged the debt, and promised, "on the word of a prince, to see it faithfully paid whenever he found occasion." This, indeed, is the true way to pay old debts, and reminds the writer that he has seen the legend, "Hoy no se fia mañana si," written over the counter of many a "pulperia" in the River Plate.

In 1650 the Earl created his "cusin," Sir William Graham of Gartmore, his lieutenant for calling and convening "our kind freendis, tenants, cotters and hinds betwix Achyll and the foot of Lochard." A ragged regiment Sir William Graham must have found himself at the head of; but then Coventry is not situated "betwix Achyll and the foot of Lochard." The Cromwellians seem to have added to his afflictions by "totallie burning and weisting the paroch of Aberfoyll, which wes stocked with hys steilbowe corne." After the loss of the King's favour and his son's death, the petty miseries of a man struggling against a load of debt seem to have broken down even his hopeful spirit, for in a paper in the Buchanan Charter-

chest he describes himself "as much decayed and worne."

In 1661, Campbell of Glenorchy was unable to visit him at his castle in Inch Talla, by "reason of the ice." The ice, too, was settling round his heart, and in the same year he died, worn out with grief and debt, and leaving to his heir a heritage of troubles. Thus ended, in a little island in a little lake, the life of one who at one time was the first peer of Scotland, high in favour with the King, fawned on by courtiers, but at the last without a friend, without an occupation but to chew the cud of bitter recollection and watch the wavelets breaking on the pebbles of Arnmaak, or listen to the cawing of the rooks in the stag-headed chestnuts of Inchmahome.

CHAPTER IV

ATAVISM

Showing how misfortunes are often hereditary, and relating the death of the Beggar Earl of Menteith

It is said that the evil that men do lives after them, and this saying may be extended to the follies of mankind. It is quite likely that had William, the seventh Earl of Menteith, attended to business at home, stringing up McGregors and McFarlanes when occasion offered, and refrained from going to Court to seek for titles, that his grandson William, the eighth and last Earl of Menteith, would not have passed through the thirty years purgatory of poverty that he endured. Certain it is that the house of Menteith with him fell into complete decadence. He does not seem to have been a foolish man, at least not more foolish than many other noblemen of his or of our own time. Wicked he certainly was not, for has not Holy Writ itself informed us that the wicked commonly flourish like green bay-trees? From first to last

evil fortune, debts, ill health and ill assorted wives, made his life a misery.

In 1661 he succeeded to the title. Like a wise Scotch nobleman he determined to travel "furth of Scotland" at once. This seems to have been the one prudent resolution of his life. Fate, however, laid him by the heels fast with the ague in London at the "Signe of the Blacke Swan" in the Strand. Thus the Earl never swam in a gondola, visited Rome, Amsterdam, Brussels, Paris, or any of the capitals where noble youth of the period were wont to repair to improve their minds and to perfect themselves in fencing. Not that the district of Menteith has not produced some notable swordsmen, "tall fellows of their hands," as Dugald Ciar Mohr, Rob Roy, Henry Cunningham of Boquhan, and Captain McLachlan of Auchentroig, who fought at Minden, are there to testify. A tradition lingers that Andrea de Ferrara once made swords at Auchray. The afore-said Andrea is reputed to have plied his trade in so many parts of Scotland that he must either have been in constant motion, which would soon have rendered his industry precarious, or he must have lived about a hundred years, or his residences have become as migratory as the birthplaces of Homer or Mr. Gladstone.

Failing in his object of foreign travel, the Earl seems to have addressed himself to the illusory

pursuit of the money owing to his family by the Crown. A good "ganging plea" has been the ruin of many a Scotch proprietor, but a ganging plea against the Crown is an unusual opportunity even for a nobleman. The Earl availed himself of it to the full. As in the country where he was born he must have had plenty of the Bible, it is almost a wonder he did not remember the allusions to the promises of princes which it contains.

In 1661 we find him at the Court of Whitehall asking for the "ffifty thousande pounds [whether sterling or Scottish is not stated] due untoe your petitioner's grandfather. And your petitioner shall ever pray." Perhaps is praying still. What faith it must have required to have petitioned the ever-blessed Charles by the grace of God! In 1663 he married his sister Elizabeth to Sir William Graham of Gartmore.

In 1677 he writes to David, second Earl of Wemyss, that he was "warpt in a laberinth of almost a never-ending trouble." His orthography also seems to have been a little "warpt" even for the times in which he wrote. The trouble was undoubted, for it appears he was "on everie syde perplext by to pressing creditors, and in con-seene this term of Martinmas they wil get no monyes, tho' they should tak my life." Life is the last thing a creditor ever wishes to take. The Earl need have been under no apprehension. Then

came marriage, often as bad as creditors or worse. However, death is said to relieve a man of both. About this time he married one Anna Hewes, who, as the author of the "Red Book of Menteith" observes, was probably an English lady. From her he was divorced. But his creditors had taken him for better or for worse, and again we find him complaining against their "unreasonableness." His second wife was Katherine Bruce, daughter of Bruce of Blairhall. She could not stand the croaking of the frogs in the lake under the Castle of Talla, and betook herself to Edinburgh. The droning of the bagpipes in the hall and the croaking of the frogs under her bedroom window might have been a valid plea or pleas for Anna Hewes to take herself from the company of her sweet lord. For Katherine Bruce, however, the case stands differently, and as a Scottish gentlewoman she ought to have been proof against all kinds of national music.

In those days few things strike one more vividly than the fact that lawyers and a "wee bit writing" were the very essence of the people's lives. Scotland has always been the home of lawyers, and the people only took their necks from underneath the yoke of the priests and friars to place them just as fairly under that of the ministers and attorneys. Still, in these degenerate days, a man would not deliberately enter into a duly signed and witnessed contract with his own wife,

as the Earl did, and set forth that "he shall have full freedom and libertie to goe about his affairs to Edinburgh, or any place elsewhere theranent." A latchkey would be cheaper.

This omnipresence of the scrivener and his intrusion into daily life was not confined to Scotland. During the conquest of America not a ship sailed or expedition started into the wilderness without its lawyer, and that in the face of an edict by Charles V. that neither solicitors nor advocates (*procuradores ó abogados*) shall pass to the Indies. In 1541 Francisco de Orellana, in a boat with forty-seven companions, descending the then unnavigated Amazon, gives up his command, is elected again by his forty-seven followers, with different powers, writes down the same in a ragged bit of paper, in a contemporary legal hand signs it, and the forty-seven soldiers also sign, in various styles of characters, resembling crossbow arrow-heads, lance points, and other hands of write peculiar to the age. The document reposes at Seville in the archives of the Indies.*

Luckily to-day men do not make contracts with their wives as to their personal liberty, though, no doubt, we shall return to that as things progress.

"Riding the Parliament" was one of the chief recreations of a self-respecting Scottish nobleman

* It has been recently published by Don José Medina, at the cost of the Duke of Tsaerclaes de Tilly.

of the seventeenth century, a custom as honoured in the observance as the breach. Surely if a man chances to be a peer, one of the duties of his condition is to appear in public, that is, if he be a personable peer. Stuck upon a horse in cotton velvet-gown, with an ermine hood and coronet, the mob could tell who was and who was not a gentleman. To-day, when the possession of an Albert chain decides the question, the examination almost approaches that undergone by thieves and politicians at a police court. The Earl of Menteith was one of those who never shrank from any public duty, however painful.

So in 1687 I find him writing to the Marquis of Montrose, asking him to get some earl's robes for him, as "our aine was destroyed in the Einglish tyme." Many and manifold have been the outrages on Scotland by our ancient enemies of England. In times gone by they hanged us and they harried us, they quartered and they drew us. In more modern days they have usurped our kilts, and forced their speech upon us, making the modern Scottish jargon a sort of linsey-woolsey of a thing got betwixt Whitechapel and Cowcaddens. Never, though, as far as I have read, except on this occasion, did they palter with the garments of a belted earl. In after times they abolished the Scottish Parliament, and in their dastardly attempt to prevent a Scottish nobleman attending I see but

the precursor to their subsequent villainy. Sourgent was the earl that on the same day he writes again to the Marquis, "to provide and get the lene from some earle, their robs, fite mantle, and vellvat coates, and all things that belongs to Parliament robs. I will heave four footmen in livra. Last tyme when I reid the Parliament I carried the scepter and I had the lene of the decesed Erle of Lothian's robes, but perhaps this Erle will reid himself."* There is something pathetic in the way the poverty-stricken and disillusioned man recalls how, in happier days, he bore the sceptre. How the deceased Earl of Lothian was to ride even to a Parliament passes the mind of man to imagine; not that a dead rider is a thing unknown.

Once between Villaguay and Nogoyá, in Entre-Rios, the writer of this brief chronicle came, in a little clearing of the great forest of Montiel, on two brothers, one living and one dead, jogging at the "trotecito" on their horses. The living brother, a fine young Gaucho, upright and swaying with his horse, like only a Gaucho, the dead one just as upright, tied in his saddle to two sticks. The object of the journey to bury the deceased in consecrated ground at Gualeguay. Vayan con Dios Caballeros.

Horses were another cross in the life of the unlucky eighth Earl of Menteith. In the same

* "Red Book of Menteith," from papers in Gartmore and Buchanan Charter-chests.

letter in which he asks for "the robs," he asks for the loan of "a peaceable horse." The horrors of attending Parliament must have been intensified when a man's horse was not peaceable. Of all the costumes for riding an unquiet horse in, a peer's robes must have been the most ill-advised. Again, in 1678, the Earl writes excusing himself for not going to Perth to attend a militia meeting from want of a horse. "Though I was leader for one horse within the parish of Aberfoyle, and although I gott never my localitie for the horse, butt was given to others, yet notwithstanding for all that, I will sett my horse to the rendivouse." Clear composition is not necessary to a peer, but we would like to know what the above meant to the Earl, and why he never "gott a localitie" for the horse.

In 1688 the Earl writes to the Marquis of Montrose, informing him that he has apprehended some men engaged in harbouring the murderers of Archbishop Sharpe, and narrowly missed laying hands on Balfour and Hackston of Rathillet. His zeal for the Government was reported to the King, who promised (as per usual) to remember him on "a fitt occasioun."

Parliament never ceased from troubling the Earl, as it now does the nation, for the minister of the Port of Menteith signs a certificate as to his unfitness to attend in the year 1689.

The chief thought as death approaches an unfortunate man is generally how to entail the property which has cursed his life upon some innocent successor. Earl William was no exception to the rule. In 1688 he writes to his "unkle," Sir James Graham, as to the marriage of the daughter of Sir James with some one on whom the earldom could be conferred. A smart captain of horse, and a most personable man, as his picture at Glamis Castle testifies, "myne own cousing, the Laird of Claverus," first occurred to him. He, writes the Earl, "is a person exceeding weell accomplished as any I know with natur gifts . . . and hes a free extent of good payable rent near by Dundee."

If "natur gifts" are to be a handsome man and a fine horseman, certainly Claverhouse was well endowed; and as to "payable rent," it is exceedingly likely that few tenants would have cared to get into arrears with such a landlord. Sir James, however (no doubt a whey-faced Whig), refused the alliance.

The young lady married a Captain Rawdon, son of an unknown baronet, Sir George Rawdon, and lost the opportunity of being the wife of the most brilliant Scotchman of the age.

In reading the letters of Claverhouse to the Earl, one is almost tempted to believe that there may be some truth in the aphorism, "*le style c'est*

l'homme," so very like they are to what one imagines the writer. "Asseur yourself," he says in one, "if ever ther be baricades in Glescw* again, you shall not want a call, and my Lord I bespeak ane imployment with you, which is to be your lieutenant generall, and I will asseur you we will make the world talk of us." It is probable, indeed, the world would have talked, but only of the "lieutenant generall." By the letters Claverhouse seems to have been at least as good a diplomatist as he was a soldier. The way in which he flatters the poor old Earl in his letters from the Court, shows he could have made his fortune had he chosen to be as dishonest as most men of his time, or of our own.

The marriage with Claverhouse having fallen through, and another projected match with the Marquis of Montrose having been a failure, despair seems to have settled on the unlucky Earl. The earldom he wished to leave to the Marquis of Montrose, but the King objected, and Claverhouse tried hard to get the Earl to leave the title to him; but death was soon to set him free from all of them.

In 1694 he died, after a life of struggling with debts and troubles and misfortunes from his birth. His personal estate went to his nephew, Sir John Graham of Gartmore, but it proved chiefly a heritage of debts. So in misfortune expired the

* Glescw for Glasgow is quite a Cavalier's spelling.

earldom of Menteith, one of the most illustrious titles of Scotland.

Round certain names there seems a halo of ill-luck. Often it makes the owners of the names more sympathetic to us, as a golden nimbus in a picture by the Ferrara school often redeems the angular features of an early Italian saint. At other times, especially when joined with poverty, it makes the victim almost ridiculous. Justice, divine or human, always presses hardest on the unfortunate, and the Earls of Menteith seem to have been criminal enough in some way known to Providence. Courage they had as an inheritance of race, and often showed it, but to little or no acconnt. Ability was shown by several of them, but it availed them nothing. Possessions and titles were showered upon them, but they neither profited by nor kept them. Little by little all their broad acres made themselves wings, till at the last, of all the earldoms of Menteith, Airth, and Stratherne, only the little island in the reedy pine-girt lake was left, and there, in the grey peel-tower facing to Ben Dhearg, the last Earl died. Even his burial-place is not well known, though in his will he gave directions to "my nevoy" Sir John Graham "to cause ane exquisite and cunning measone erect two statues of fyne hewen stone for anself and for me deerest spouse Dame Catherine Bruce,"

The statues were never erected, or, if erected, have mouldered away like the Earl; or, may be, some Presbyterian has taken them for saints, and being angry that poor mortals should have any to pray for us, has made away with them.

A lower depth of misery had to be touched by one who called himself Earl of Menteith. In 1744, when the peers of Scotland were proceeding to engage in the degrading ceremony of stamping a Scottish nobleman as inferior to a peer of England by election, the name Menteith was answered to by a thin, cadaverous-looking youth, who informed the assembled mummers that he was the Earl of Menteith by right of birth and of descent, and was at present studying medicine in Edinburgh. From that moment till his death, although warned to desist by the House of Lords, he never dropped his claim.

For a year or two he regularly attended at all elections of a Scottish peer, but at last seemed to have become disgusted, perhaps at the whole undignified proceeding, and used to retire from Edinburgh before the day of the election. Gradually he sank into obscurity, and little by little into mendicancy, and at last sustained himself by begging from house to house, under the title of the "Beggar Earl."

In 1747 he published a pamphlet, now become most rare and hard to meet with, entitled, "The

Fatal Consequences of Discord, or a Political Address to the Noble and Rich Families of Great Britain." In the title of the tract are contained several propositions, such as, "That there can be no true unity without true religion and virtue," a proposition excellent in itself and difficult to controvert, and which places its enunciator on about the same intellectual footing as the member of the "National Convention" in Paris during the "Terror" who rose to demand "l'arrestation des coquins et des lâches."

Ever since honest men have mixed in matters political they have always seen at once that "true unity is impossible without religion and virtue," but, unfortunately, the difficulty as yet has been the want of any one to arrest "les coquins et les lâches."

The pamphleteer also sets forth "that the multiplicity of laws is as great a sign of the corruption of a State as the diversity of medicines is of the distemper of the body." Had not the pamphlet been dedicated to the Prince of Wales, "our only hope of a Protestant succession," I had almost come to the conclusion the writer had been an Anarchist.

After much of Alexander (he of Macedon), of Philip, Aristippus, and the proper quotation on Government by Aristotle, he concludes by saying: "May virtue then flourish in this island and appear

to the Englishmen [no word of Scotland] to be somewhat more than a little pork with a variety of sauce." The end is rather enigmatical, for virtue seems to be flourishing enough, even in England, where sauces never vary. And as to pork, virtue is not so fickle as to dis sever it from apple-sauce.

"The whole by the Right Honble. Earl of Menteith, Stratherne, and Airth, Lord Kilpont and Baron Gartmore." As the last title never existed, it shows the writer of the pamphlet was not entirely without imagination.

Pamphleteering does not seem to have raised his fortunes, for by degrees even his beggar's wallet seems to have grown empty, and last scene of all, some neighbours near Bonhill, in Dumbar-tonshire, came on the body of the Beggar Earl by the roadside.

So, like a cadger's pony, passed away one who without doubt had in his veins the blood of a king of Scotland, and whose ancestors had been the proudest in the land. Perhaps the Beggar Earl, in his poverty and wanderings, was not much more unhappy than his ancestors, bowed down with all the cares of State. One wonders, seeing who he was, he did not join Charles Edward Stewart and march to Derby. At least he could have suffered on Tower Hill, and shown a Beggar Earl could meet his fate as bravely as the most duly coroneted.

Considering that his family had all been great upholders of the Stewarts, the "Protestant succession" and the Beggar Earl seem strangely ill assorted. What could it matter to him if they mumbled a mass, or dinged the very "harricles" out of the bible, and garred the stour flee about the Chapel Royal, after the fashion of Geneva. Still, all the thousand ills which wait on poverty, and take away its dignity and pathos, oftentimes rendering it ridiculous; the miseries of a wandering beggar's life, the hope deferred, the insolence of fools, and the last night by the roadside dyke in Bonhill parish may have been as keen a martyrdom to bear as the shorter and sharper, though more glorious one, he might have met on Tower Hill.

CHAPTER V

TRADITIONAL

Of things and others; on the infrequency of types in modern life; with all about "Trootie."

PAINSTAKING historians not a few have laboured both in and out of their vocations to preserve the memory of all most notable within Menteith and the surrounding districts. Graham of Duchray, the Rev. Mr. Kirk of Aberfoyle, "who went to his own herde" in 1692, the Rev. Patrick Graham, also of Aberfoyle, Sir Walter Scott, the Rev. Mr. McGregor Stirling, Sir William Fraser, and others, including Mr. Dunn, have written of the antiquities and legends. Of later years, Mr. Andrew Lang has enriched our literature with one of his most successful flights in minor poetry, in memory of Mr. Kirk, the astral vicar of Aberfoyle. Each in his own particular style after their kind have done brave things for themselves and their district.

Few have been so Homeric as Graham of

Duchray in his account of Lord Glencairn's expedition, of which he was "an eye- and also an ear-witness." Pleasant in these days of prosing to record a history beginning thus :

"The Earl of Glencairn went from his own house of Finlestone in the beginning of the month of August, 1653, to Lochearn, where several of the clans did meet him."

Pretty to read, too, the combat on horseback, as befitted cavaliers, between Sir George Monro and the Lord Glencairn, and to learn how, at the first blow, my lord disabled Sir George's bridle-hand, and when the combat was resumed on foot my lord did strike him such blows on the forehead as caused the blood to trickle into his eyes and blind him; and to hear that my lord evidently intended to "mak siccar," as his lordship's valet, one John White, struck up his lordship's hand, exclaiming, "You have enough of him, my lord; you have got the better of him."

A presuming and impertinent fellow this same John White, and it does one good to hear that my lord turned on him and "struck him a great blow on the shoulder." In fact a case of the most proper infliction of "your right strappado," and an example of what comes to those who interfere between two gentlemen taking the air of a morning upon Dornoch Links.

Duelling seems to have been more severely

punished in those days on occasion, than we generally believed, for a second combat having arisen (also on Dornoch Links) between two gentlemen called Lindsay and Livingstone, on account of their having taken different sides in the quarrel between Lord Glencairn and Sir George Monro, the victor, Lindsay, who had slain his foe, was executed at Dornoch Cross. "The Earl of Glencairn was troubled at this gentleman's death; but all must be done, forsooth, to please Sir George."

Execution was a summary affair in Graham of Duchray's time, for a trifling Englishman, masquerading as Captain Gordon, but whose real name proved to be Portugus (*sic*), was also executed later on for some breach of duty. "Portugus" seems doubtful as an English name; but when have Southrons kept even to probability in dealing with Scotsmen?

After the incident of the pseudo-Portugus, Graham of Duchray relates how Lord Glencairn's expedition laid siege to the Laird of Lethen's house, and lost five men. "The general being incensed at this, ordered the soldiers to pull down several stacks of corn, with which he filled the court and gates of the house, which being set on fire, he judged the smoke would stifle them, the wind blowing it into the house; but it took not the effect that he expected."

Graham does not inform us if this incident "troubled Lord Glencairn," but briefly finishes by saying, "we departed and burnt all Lethen's land." A military incident told in a military fashion for soldiers, quite in the manner of the French in Algeria or the English in Zululand. The narrative finishes abruptly, after describing the terms the Earl of Glencairn made for his followers with General Monk, with the announcement that "this happened on the 4th day of September, 1654. The Earl of Glencairn that same night crossed the water and came to his own house of Finlaystone." The narrative reminds one of the account of the conquest of Mexico by Bernal Diaz del Castillo, though Graham of Duchray lacked the power of description which makes the history of the stout-hearted, simple-minded Governor of the city of Santiago de Guatemala such a charming book.

Antiquarians have commented on and disagreed about the origin and name of one of our natural curiosities, the Flanders Moss. Some have it it once formed part of the *Sylva Caledonica*. Others, again, derive its name from a supposititious Danish word, "Flynders," said by themselves to signify a flat. Antiquarians are such a joy to a community that it is perhaps a work of supererogation to look too closely into their assertions.

The Moss is still amongst us, and Nimmo, in

his "History of Stirlingshire," declares the ancient name was the Tilly Moss, and instances the survival of the name in the local Sessentilly.

Baad nan Sassenach (the Englishman's wood), near the Miltown of Aberfoyle, is duly celebrated in local chronicles, and the slaughter, or murder, for he was said to be shot by a non-combatant, of the luckless Sassenach in the times of Cromwell.

Tobanareal, the spring where the Tutor of Appin slew the Earl of Menteith, or is said to have slain him, on the road to Glenly, has also had its chroniclers and commentators. The old Fingalian path that the Appin men must have followed as it leads past the spring still exists, a whitish trail through the heather and bracken left by the deerskin mocassins of centuries, and perpetuated by the hobnailed boots of the rustics of to-day. Few traverse it nowadays, though in its time many a "creagh" must have been driven from the "Laich" to the hills of Appin, past the decayed old house of Glenly.

Few of the present generation know the "Tyepers" or the "Red Path," and fewer still the wild track which leads out of Glen Finlas, past the Alte Glen Mean* into Balquhiddar. Rob Roy must have known it blindfold by day and night, as it is difficult to see how cattle could

* Alte Glen Mean; in English, the waterfall in the glen of the roe.

have been more quickly driven into Balquhiddy than by that path. A shepherd now and then, or a strolling beggar, can tell the names of the old tracks and paths which frequently crossed the hills from strath to strath. To-day the keeper, the only man except the shepherd who ever uses those forgotten ways, knows them but as the "short cut to so and so." Of cartridges and bores of guns he is learned, but knows as little of the history of the past as the Spanish peasant, who attributes anything older than his father's time to the all-constructing Moors.

The sportsmen, who gambol like skirt-dancers at a music-hall, dressed in the parti-coloured petticoats they believe the clansmen wore, euphemiously call all wells the "Luncheon Well," all stones and rocks the "Telescope Rock" and "Game Bag Stone," inventing as complete and homogeneous a phraseology as if the district of Menteith were situated in Deaf Smith County, Texas. No one can blame them, for Gaelic is not an easy tongue, and an acquaintance with it hard to acquire for many reasons, one of which is the extreme reluctance of the talented possessors of it to condescend to base particulars. Who has not asked a Highlander what such and such a name portends and not been answered, "Och, it is just a Gaelic word whatever!" An excellent explanation, full and satisfying enough

to those proud beings who "have the Gaelic," but strangely unsubstantial to the mere Sassenach.

It might have puzzled even Professor Blackie, who between Greek and Gaelic was never at a loss to construct a derivation for most Scottish names, to disentangle the confusion into which many of the names of places have fallen into in the Menteith district. Naturally, as Gaelic became forgotten, the pronunciation of the names became a matter of personal convenience rather than etymology, and as in Spain, where the Arabic names have often been mangled beyond recognition, the Gaelic words in Menteith have suffered a sad Lowland change. Never shall I forget the efforts of a grave Arab to preserve his gravity before a restored Arabic inscription in a Spanish church. It appeared the verse of the Koran had been written upside down, and several letters wrongly made, so that the inscription assigned some attributes to God which even a true believer could with difficulty reconcile to his belief. Whether a Gaelic scholar would encounter a cryptogamic joke in some of our local names I know not, or even if joking is recognised in Gaelic, but I am certain that names like "Critilvean," "Polybaglot," and others, would puzzle most philologists.

One site of a clan battle none of the historians I have mentioned seem to have dealt with. At

Craig Vadh, above the slate quarry of Aberfoyle, on the ridge where the old Loch Katrine road just loses Menteith from sight, are ten or fifteen long-shaped cairns. Here tradition has it that a band of foragers from Lochaber were overtaken by the men of Lennox and Menteith, and a fierce fight ensued. The cairns are where the dead men's bodies were found; their graves a little farther down the hill, buried in fern and bracken, marked by grey stones.

As for burial places, folk are hard to please. Some like your quiet corner, under a yew-tree, close to some Norman church in England. A quiet resting place enough it makes too, with the parson's pony (or the intruding donkey of the Nonconformist) cropping the long lush grass above one. Pleasant to come to in the summer evenings, when swifts flit to and fro like ghosts, and cockchafers hum in the leafy trees, are these same country churchyards in England.

In spite of the natural beauty of the land, in spite of faith sufficient to turn all Scotland into a pampa, what is it makes a Scottish churchyard so different? It may be that the knowledge that the sleepers' souls are all in torment—for none could possibly have escaped the penalties so liberally dispensed to them in life in church—renders one apprehensive. Again, the absence of "affliction sore" upon the tombstones may make the graves

less homelike, but still the fact remains, our national churchyard is not inviting to the world-worn traveller. Again, there are some who think your three square yards of canvas and your lump of lead, with the Union Jack, and "therefore we commit this body to the deep," the fittest burial for man. Still, for the men who lie so quietly on the green slope under Craig Vadh I fancy no other resting-place would seem as pleasant. What if the tourist passes, in the diurnal coach, within a quarter of a mile? What if the cockney (oblivious of the fact that Rob Roy's well is really under Craig Vadh) descends to slake his whisky and his thirst at a spurious fountain, made with hands, hard by the turnpike road? All this, and how the world is changed, they can know nothing of, or how to-day tall fellows are slaughtered in different fashion from that in which they died. For all I know, the times in which they lived were better than the times we know; perhaps were worse. At any rate, wolves roamed the hills, as the name Craig Vadh would seem to show. Around the desolate Loch Reoichte, perhaps, the Caledonian bull has fed, the wild boar harboured; and yet the ground was more secure than nowadays, for fewer perils from broken whisky-bottles and sardine-tins lurked in the heather. And how shall sardine-tins offend? Are they not, after all, a sign, natural and visible,

of the spirit of the age, and did not Providence place them (most likely) in our path to show us something? What if we cannot see it, and only cut our feet upon the bottles or jagged tins? No doubt the cross, which, seen in the sky, converted Constantine, was there before; and many another Roman general was not so much a deep-dyed pagan as merely unobservant.

Hard by Craig Vadh is the desolate hill tarn known as Loch Reoichte. In the district there are many of these curious black hill lochs, generally in peaty hollows, with water black as jet, peopled with little muddy trout, and often overgrown with water-lilies.

Each has its legend, as in duty bound. Loch McAn Righ, close to the Lake of Menteith, is sacred to the memory of a king's son who, in the days when princes of the blood-royal perambulated the world at a loose end and unattended, almost lost his life whilst chasing the wild deer, by his horse bogging down with him. Tradition hath it that one Betty or Betsy, for there is room for doubt which of the forms of the name the maiden bore, extracted him, like a royal cork, from the mud and saved his life. The field is known as Achnaveity, said by Gaelic-speaking men to mean the field of Betty. Tradition is in error in having woven no romance about the King of Scotland's son and Betty, but then how seldom

tradition, on the whole, misses its opportunities in matters of the sort. Anyhow, near by the field is the "laroch" of the chapel of Arnchly, one of the four chapels connected with the monastery of Inchmahome, so possibly the nearness of the sacred edifice prevented scandal making free with the Prince's or Betty's name.

Other little lochs preserve their legend, as the Loch at Duchray Castle, said to be unfathomable, and the Tinkers' Loch (Loch an Cheird), above the hills of Aberfoyle, in which the mysterious water-bull of the Highland legends was said to dwell. Amongst them all for desolate beauty Loch Reoichte stands first.* In winter it may well be called the frozen loch, standing as it does in a sort of cup on the top of a hill. In summer clouds of midges hang over its sullen waters. Standing by it is the only place in the district where one sometimes fancies he can conjure up what a Highlander of two hundred years ago was like.

It does not want much effort of imagination to see the Lowlander, the hard-featured, commonplace "*stipulosus vernaculus*," as Bower described Henry Smith of Perth, over whom Sir Walter has thrown such a glamour of romance. Whether in a rusty morrion and jacks, clothed in a "stan o' black," or in the fearsome "defroque" (no

* Reoichte means frozen in Gaelic.

English word expresses the crassness of his appearance) that he wears to-day, the Lowlander must have always been the same. Where shall we find anything like the Highlander of the old chronicles in Scotland of to-day? Not in the gillie of the shooting-lodges, insolent and servile at the same time; not in the crofter or the cotter, for it is well known the bone and sinew of the Highland clans are to be looked for rather in Canada or Georgia than in Scotland.

Still, standing by Loch Reoichte, it sometimes seems one can call up a sort of Indian, lithe and agile, yet lazy and indolent when off the warpath, stealing through the heather with his silent deer-skin shoes, looking at nothing, yet seeing everything, as men who spend their lives in the open air engaged in war or hunting are wont to do.

Types have become infrequent in Menteith, as in the other districts of Scotland. The author of the "Scotch Hairst Kirn," printed in 1821, and descriptive of a harvest-home at the farm of Ledard by Aberfoyle, might search the country in vain for such a character as "Bauldy McRosat," or "Will Shore," and return like Diogenes after his search through the Athenian Stock Exchange. Were it not for "Trootie" we might almost say the type of semi-mendicant, of whom Sir Walter has so many specimens, had ceased to exist. "Trootie," however, saves us from the reproach. In the dark

ages he was said to have been a weaver "about Balfroon." This statement I put forth, whilst not believing it, for all it may be worth.

Weavers (*vide* the works of Barrie and others) have mostly been superior-minded persons who were taken up with politics, theology, and other matters which do not go far to help to keep a family. Writers of talent have told us of how the virtues banished from cities still lurk amongst the brethren of their craft. One thing I cannot think it possible they have done, that is, produced a fisher. Fishers of men may be they have put forth, but that kind mostly fish for their own hand, and "Trootie" in that respect is blameless. It may be that his father or some degenerate scion of his family plied the base shuttle in fashion tame and mechanical. "Trootie" himself, I'll swear, has never soiled his hands with honest toil, that honest toil we talk so much about and all avoid. Nature turns out a perfect fly-fisher but very seldom.

Your "pêcheur à la ligne" swarms in the suburbs of our cities, and has his villa. His faith is great, his cuticle is pachydermatous, turning off jokes and midges as a tapir's hide turns off an Indian's spear in Paraguay. Who has not seen and silently despised your fisher with a float?

On the much-painted upper reaches of the Thames, along the quays in Paris, they sit in rows, like penguins on a beach. The very fishes know

them, and eat their ground bait in a condescending way. Their faith is great, as great as a Theosophist's, and just as practical. One wonders at them, but would not care to imitate their mode of life. Your fly-fisher is of a different race. His toil is not productive, as a general rule, but then his daily business takes him into pleasant places. He knows the reaches of the river under the alders, where the water eddies round the stones and where the big fish lie. Not that he catches any of them.

He knows the stepping-stones, can tell of perils in crossing them in the great spate, and does so. The stump the dipper sits upon, for all the world exactly like a judge upon the bench, and just as wise of face, the fly-fisher can point to. Where from the reeds the heron rises of a misty morning, or where the whistling mallard settles with a splash in the gloaming of the day, he knows. The king-fisher flashing through the sunlight like a bit of the tropics gone astray in northern latitudes, the fly-fisher has marked. Something there is of peril in the very exercise and mystery of his craft, at least to the eyes and clothing. So that, take him for all in all, the fisher with the fly to the manner born is not a man you meet with every day.

Nature alone can make him, and, like most of her best products, she turns them out with parsimony. "Trootie," I take it, fly-fished from his

earliest youth. Like Indians I have seen, who could take a tired horse and somehow make him gallop when no one else could make him move, "Trootie" appears to have the instinct of the fisher. Let others fish with all the best appurtenances of fishing-tackle makers, and toil all day and yet catch nothing, let "Trootie" pass and fish the self-same water, with a rod with as many splicings as Petrucchio's bridle, and fly like a piece of a moulting feather broom, and ten to one he fills a basket. Withal not proud of his success, but taking it as something sent from heaven and marketable.

It was on a summer evening I first saw "Trootie," waddling like a Narragansett pacer up the avenue. At first sight nothing about him showed the intrinsic merit of the man. No one could call him handsome or majestic in appearance. Had Edie Ochiltree risen from his grave and stood beside him, your halfpenny had certainly not gone to "Trootie," that is if personal appearance had influenced your judgment. A little shilpet, feckless-looking body, dressed in a sort of moss-trout coloured and much patched coat of various shades of troutiness and stages of decay; summer and winter a grey woollen comforter resembling a stocking, such as farmers used to wear in the dark ages, round his throat; his "cadie," for I cannot call it hat, a cross between a beehive and a

pudding bag, and girt about with casts of fuzzy home-made flies ; over his shoulders a dilapidated fishing-basket, always well stuffed with trout ; for freedom and convenience in working, his toes protruding through his boots, which looked as if they were chosen on a dunghill ; his walk a sort of shuffle, such as fishers often use, and seem to take a pride in.

Apparently the man was older than the rocks ; no one can say with certainty they ever saw him younger than sixty. A pleasant age enough to be born at, sixty is, if one was born quite free from rheumatism. Love over, and the taste for speculation and adventure on the wane, avarice but just beginning, with the prospect of a healthy, untroubled life till eighty, and then oblivion of life's troubles, with the usual mendacious epitaph. However " Trootie," if he was not fashed by love, except perhaps of " speerits," and if in his case avarice was a thing illusory, yet had his cross, and it was rheumatism. He thought it was contracted sleeping by the banks of streams, in order to get to business early in the morning, after a glass or two at night. Perhaps it was the sleeping by the streams, perhaps the glasses overnight ; at any rate, the rheumatism was " sort o' fashous," and he appeared to think it a special instance of the malevolence of Providence in dealing with His fishers.

His conversation, if I recollect it rightly, was entirely of his craft, and ran on fishes and fishing, fishes caught and basketed, but more on fishes lost. A tale he had of fishing in the Tinkers' Loch alone amongst the hills. There it appears he hooked a monster early in the morning after sleeping beside the loch. Visions came to him of fame and even wealth if the monster could be landed. The "paragraph" in the local paper of "that veteran sportsman, Mr. Wilkie (better known as 'Trootie')," was all set up and ready in his mind's eye; the monster, duly stuffed, was in a case in the window of the fishing-tackle maker's shop, when see, the cursed luck that always hovers o'er a fisher! Just at the bank, "I had almost grippit him; he gaed a wallop wi' his tail," and then "Trootie" can mind no more until next morning, when he woke beside the loch feeling stiff and "sair forfouchten." The devil of it is that from that day to this he is not sure if he passed one or two nights sleeping by the Tinkers' Loch.

Like Lear, his children were not worthy of him, for none of them were fishers, but took up trades and followed settled occupations in a prosaic fashion. This caused him grief, but drew forth no astonishment, for he would moralise upon the hardness of the fisher's lot, and how the lairds of his youth would often give a guinea for the fish

(worth eightpence at the most) that I had purchased most unwillingly for half-a-crown.

Let him fish on, if he still lives to fish—for, for a year or two I have missed him from his usual haunts—let him fish on, before the County Council sends an inspector to see that fishers all wear goloshes and chest-protectors, and none use rods exceeding eighteen feet in length, or contravene the bye-laws.

A man like "Trootie" in a country such as ours, where all endeavour to make money and to rise in the world by shoving others down, ought to be kept (perhaps he is) by national subscription, as an example of how even a Scotchman may revert to the ways of his uncivilised progenitors. As far as it concerns me, all I hope is that his shadow on the bank may never dwindle ; and if his personality was somewhat snuffy and his talk like that of other fishers, not always quite exact in detail, much can be excused in one who left deliberately the gross delights of sleeping in a bed and meals three times a day ("aboot Balfroon") to fish laborious days.

CHAPTER VI

PANTHEISTIC

Setting forth some particulars of two Menteith worthies, with something of Sith Bruachs, and some remarks on shadows.

ONE of the most characteristic of the few remaining types of the past was certainly Hugh Graham, of the Port of Menteith. Those who do vainly (like the Pelagians) think that good manners and courtesy imply servility ought to have known Hugh Graham. Personally I am not certain if he knew with any accuracy the situation of the Seychelle Islands, or could have told one much of the binomial theorem. What I do know is that he retained in a great measure the ancient Highland manners. Oh, how refreshing those ancient Highland manners were, starting as they did from a different basis from our modern method of deportment! Strange as it may appear, Hugh Graham, although a boatman, considered himself, and was, a gentleman, and being one himself, he treated all humanity in the same style.

The modern fashion, which implies that every one is not a gentleman, leaves a different feeling on the recipient of their flavour. Not that most probably they are not better than the older style, in the same way that a bicycle is better than a horse; but then the style is different. All the legends of the district were known to Hugh, who, of course, "had Gaelic," and seemed to have personally assisted at most events of importance in Scottish history for the past two hundred years. That is the way in which a man who has the traditions should take himself—as he grows older and contemporaries die, always to antedate his birth each year a year or two, so that at last he comes to have really lived with those he talks about.

Only by living with people do we really get to know them (not always even then); and if a man makes it his daily duty to talk of Claverhouse, John Knox, Rob Roy, and other men of violence in days gone by, he gets by degrees to think he knew them all. With what an air of truthfulness old Hugh would tell the story of "Malise and the Roeskin Purse."*

One saw the Earl of Menteith laid up in lavender in Edinburgh; one saw the faithful

* McGregor Stirling preserves this story in his "History of the Priory of Inchmahome," now become a somewhat rare book.

Malise arrive on foot, bringing relief, and when the door was opened accept the halfpenny the owner of the house bestowed on him, struck with his miserable appearance. Then the Earl appeared upon the scene, and chid his follower in Gaelic for accepting alms; and Malise answered, "Och ay, my lord, but I would cheerfully have been accepting every penny the honest gentleman had in his possession." Instinctively the listener divined that Hugh had borne the purse, or been at least a listener to the dialogue, either in person or in some previous incarnation. A sportsman, too, was Hugh, having walked to Ayrshire to attend the tournament at Eglinton, of which he had a store of reminiscences. Other envious old Highlanders, when Hugh, at ninety years of age, used to go "east to the Port" to fetch his cow at nights, were wont to say, "Ay, Hugh was gey and souple for his years, but then Hugh never wrocht ony in his youth." If this was so I honour him the more, for he who can live to ninety without having "wrocht ony," and be, as Hugh was, free from guile and property, is a man to be admired.

Scotland at one time must have been full of men like Hugh. They fought at Bannockburn, at the Harlaw, were at the Sheriffmuir, went with the Chevalier to Derby, and suffered after Culloden, taking the losing side on all occasions with unerring

accuracy. Commonly in every battle the winner commands respect, the vanquished has our love; and so it may be that, whilst the men like Hugh have gone down hopelessly before the men of single and double entry, still a corner of our hearts is kept for those who fought, not against their mere conquerors, but time itself.

Of the small gentry who in times past furnished so many perfect types, those who produced the "gash Garscadden," and that fine old laird who thought there might be "wale of wigs upon the Stockie Muir," McLachlan of Auchentroig was about the last survival. Sprung from one of the oldest families in the district—his ancestors had been at Bannockburn, his grandfather at Minden—he occupied a place that no one fills to-day. Keen at a bargain, yet always loser by it; active in the affairs of others, forgetful of his own; his face as red as the great bottles in a chemist's window, he seemed a tower of strength, and yet was delicate. A sort of link between the gentry and farmers; with the first by choice a farmer, with the latter a gentleman; esteemed, yet overreached by all mankind, as lovers of a bargain often are, the laird of Auchentroig was an instance of the survival of the unfittest—that is, the unfittest for modern life. Had he been born a little earlier, he had been content to ride his Highland garron over his estate and keep his health, and midden at the

door, till eighty. As it was, his lot was cast in times too hard and uncongenial; so, like a wise man, finding the chimney of his house always a-smoking, he left the house, and also left the world the poorer by the extinction of a type.

The gradual decay of the English yeomanry is often deplored by writers and historians; few seem to take into consideration that the Scottish yeomanry is quite extinct. The Laird of Auchentroig was the last specimen of his class—at least in the district. With him expired the last of a family whose ancestors were present at almost every battle famous in Scottish history.

The little foursquare, grey stone house,* with its courtyard and its “crowsteps,” the coat of arms with its entablature let into the wall over the entrance door, the door itself studded with iron nails, and curiously wrought-iron pendant, serving for knocker and for handle, and which, tradition says, endured a siege from no less a commander than Rob Roy himself, the giant ash trees opposite the house, are now the only relics of the McLachlans, for, after all, what is the tombstone in the churchyard of Drymen? One reads “Hic Jacet,” has just time to start a-moralising, and then to catch a train.

* The house still stands, and can be examined with pleasure by those who take no interest in modern improvements.

History informs us that the Romans once ruled the greater part of Scotland, and one wonders sometimes, looking at the Roman camp, or the camp which some call Roman, others Pictish or Caledonian, at Gartfarran, why they came so far. The little camp, with its ditch now dry and fringed with hazels and with rowans, and through which runs a road, making it so like the camp where Marmion fought the spectre knight that I fancy that Sir Walter had Gartfarran in his mind's eye when he described it, is pleasant enough to go to on a summer day and sit and ponder in.

What an abode of horror it must have been to the unfortunate centurion, say from Naples, stranded in a marsh far from the world, in a climate of the roughest, and blocked on every side by painted savages! No doubt there was a sense of glory in being (except the camp of Ardoch) the farthest outpost of articulate-speaking man in the known world, but even that could scarcely have made up for the lack of news from Rome. Although the building spirit of the age has left intact (as yet) the Fairy Hill at Aberfoyle, still for some time past, in fact since the time of the Rev. Mr. Kirk, that eminent pastor "amongst the Scoto-Irish of Aberfoyle," we have no information of the Daoine Shi. Yet the existence of a veritable and historic Sith Bruach is a thing to be envied by the inhabitants of less favoured

regions. It profits little whether the Daoine Shi were really fairies or merely "Peghts," as some folk say. With all due deference to Andrew Lang, to the Rev. Mr. Kirk, and to the members of the Psychical Research Society, I opine for the theory of the "Peghts."

Sanchoniathon, Apollonius Rhodius, and Diodorus Siculus, with other well-known and deeply studied writers, such as Silius Italicus, Albertus Magnus, and Mr. Stead, may be against me, still I cleave to the "Peghts." "Singular little folk and terribly strong" is the description given of them by an ancient writer. Besides, in almost every country of the world there are traditions of a former pigmy race having trod the ground where now the giant inhabitants of the land disport themselves. So flattering to the vanity of the present inhabitants and so like the habit of mankind. All those who have gone before us were pigmies, that is proved to demonstration. Solomon never wrapped up a foolish thought in finer-sounding words than when he said that the dead lion was not the equal of the living dog.

Ten times more philosophical was the unknown elector of the State of Illinois, who always voted at the Presidential election for Henry Clay, on the plea that if it were impossible to get an honest living statesman he preferred a man like Clay, who had been honest when he was alive. So I stick

firmly to the "Peghts," and not entirely because I have seen the interior of the Sith Bruach called the Peghts' House in the moss near Coldoch, but because a fairy is a thing that a true Scotsman should not tolerate. What value can possibly attach to fairies, upon 'Change? They are never quoted except by foolish and unpractical men who deal in poetry, in folk-lore, history, and other exercises of the imagination. That which we do not see, cannot exist, else why should Providence have given us the power of sight?

In the Laguna called Yberá in Corrientes there exists a wondrous island. From the days when Hulderico Schmidel and Alvar Nuñez first sailed upon the waters of the Parana, the tradition has existed that the inhabitants of that island were pigmies. No one has seen them, and though to-day in the city of Corrientes, some fifty miles from the shores of the great Laguna, the inhabitants enjoy the blessing of electric light, municipal government, the delights of bicycles, the income-tax, as well as a revolution every three months, the mystery is still unsolved.

In matters of this sort it is well to premise a little sometimes, like the ancient Scottish lady who, having stated that the apples grown in Scotland were the finest in the world, added a rider to her statement and said, "I maun premise I like my apples sour." Therefore I must premise the Laguna

Yberá is nearly three hundred miles in length, and the interior a thicket of canes and "camaloté," through which no Christian (he who is not an Indian is an *ex-officio* Christian in those countries) has ever passed. Some of the more imaginative Christians of Corrientes assert there are no pigmies in the islands in the lake at all, and quote the Holy Scriptures, and cite the "Witch of Endor" and other portions of Holy Writ, all just as apposite, to show that fairies are the dwellers in the hidden recesses of the cane-brakes of Yberá. Fairies or pigmies, it matters little which they are, whether in Corrientes or Aberfoyle.

Good Mr. Kirk, the "painful preacher," is gone, as his son says, to "his own herd," and is said to dwell in the centre of the Fairy Hill. Better that there he stays; and if he has learned wisdom, he will never venture out again. A man might easy travel far and fare much worse than have his dwelling in the Fairy Hill.

Of pigmies in the world there will always be a plenteous supply, but fairies tend to become less common, even in Menteith. I do not mean to say a fairy is of necessity a being opposed to progress. When wire fences first were used in Scotland some thirty years or so ago, horses turned out to grass in pastures generally ran into them and maimed themselves. The more sagacious horse of modern times rarely or ever does so, but takes them into

regular account with the other foolish devices contrived by man to stop his grazing at his pleasure. All in good time the fairies will get accustomed to changed conditions, and dance as merrily upon the girders of a railway bridge as formerly upon the grass and tussocks. The motley elements which went to make the history of Menteith are gone and buried, but their shadows still remain. The Earls of Menteith, from Gillechrist to the Beggar Earl, the fairies, the Rev. Mr. Kirk, Rob Roy, the monks of Inchmahome, the Romans, Peghts, the Caledonian cattle, with the wolves, John Graham of Claverhouse and Mary Queen of Scots, have left Menteith for ever, but the shadow of their passage still remains ; at least I see it.

Life is a dream, they say, but dreams have their awakening. A shadow, when it passes over the bents so brown, across the heather, and steals into the corries of the hills, returns no more. Only a reflection of the clouds, you say. Well, if it is so, is not life only a reflection of the past ?

Could we but see a shadow of the future, and compare it with the shadows of the past, why then, indeed, we might know something of Menteith and other districts where the shadows play, coming, like life, from nowhere, and returning into nothing.

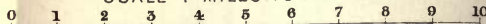
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